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ABSTRACT

There is a substantial discrepancy between normative and empirical views on Dutch standard pronunciation. The discrepancy between these views can be reduced by looking at the empirical range as being structured from an imagined point of reference. The prescriptive standard then operates as the ultimate model toward which the submodels for standard pronunciation are oriented. A study investigated whether segmental deviations from Dutch standard pronunciation affect listeners' evaluative reactions to speakers according to the nature or quality of those deviations. A 30-second fragment of neutral prose was read by seven speakers, four Dutch and three Flemish, two characterized as standard speakers and five with regional accents. From each fragment, 15 words (identical for each speaker) representing 25% of the fragment were isolated. The words contained 27 kinds of deviation from standard pronunciation. The words were presented to about 50 students, who were asked their perceptions of the speech and of the speakers. Some segmental features that may have played a role in differential attitudes toward varieties of Dutch were indicated. Phonological deviations from standard Dutch appeared to be more important in language attitudes and to get a more extreme evaluation, positive or negative, than phonetic deviations. (MSE)

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THE EVALUATION OF PHONOLOGICAL VS. PHONETIC VARIATION IN DUTCH STANDARD PRONUNCIATION*

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1. Introduction

It is generally known that there is a rather great discrepancy between normative and empirical views on Dutch standard pronunciation. From a normative point of view Dutch standard pronunciation is envisioned as a point, i.e. as a variety with no variation between forms. It is identified by linguists and recorded in pronunciation dictionaries (e.g., De Coninck 1976, Paardekooper 1978), but it is more a construct or something postulated than something real. Yet in the Dutch speech community there are some people who are considered to be pretty close to it. From an empirical point of view Dutch standard pronunciation is a range. It is the set of pronunciation features, including a lot of variation, that is recognized and accepted as standard by the Dutch speaking population.

The discrepancy between these two points of view - though not at all typical of or exclusive to the Dutch language area - can be reduced by looking at the empirical range as being structured from out an imagined point of reference, or a final model. The prescriptive standard then has an empirical reality as far as it plays a role as the ultimate model towards which the submodels for standard pronunciation are oriented (cf. Bartsch 1985).

An investigation was set up to get some more insight into the range of segmental features that is recognized and accepted as standard by the Dutch speaking population. More precisely, it was examined whether segmental deviations from Dutch standard pronunciation affect listeners' evaluative reactions to speakers according to the nature or quality of these deviations.

Numerous studies where speakers of standard and accented speech have been judged comparatively have shown that standard speakers are typically evaluated more favourably on traits relating to social status (e.g., status, succes, wealth) and competence (e.g., intelligence, confidence, ambition). For instance, in the Anglophone world Received Pronunciation is evaluated most favourably, not only in Britain (Giles and Powesland 1975), but also in Australia (Ball 1983), New Zealand (Huygens and Vaughan 1983) and the United States (Stewart, Ryan and Giles 1985).

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In some cultural contexts nonstandard accents, though on the whole endowed with less prestige than the standard pronunciation model, have shown further evaluative differentiations along a status hierarchy. This status hierarchy seems to be due to more or less favourable stereotypes of various ethnic accents on an evaluative hierarchy (e.g., Berry, Kalin and Taylor 1977) or to different associations linked with more or less industrialized regions within a linguistic community (e.g., Giles 1970). It may, however, also be due to degree of accent. For instance, in the context of Spanish-English bilingualism in the United States Ryan, Carranza and Moffie (1977) found that degree of accent correlated negatively with listeners' judgements on speakers' status and solidarity. Also Giles (1972) found a considerable influence of degree of accent on the evaluation of the aesthetic and communicative value as well as the social prestige of speakers from different regions in Britain.

Since degree of accent, defined as the quantity of segmental features realized in a way divergent from standard pronunciation, affects the evaluative reactions to speakers, one might ask whether the nature or quality of segmental features deviant from standard pronunciation influences the evaluative content of reactions to speakers as well. In the before-mentioned study by Giles (1972) judgements clearly varied with accents' broadness, but the way in which the judgements changed differed both across accents and across judges. As far as could be verified no investigator in the field of language attitude research has tried to describe the precise effect of short-term characteristics of a segmental nature upon attitudes towards different groups of speakers. This is the more strange, considering that language varieties, like accent or dialect, are usually defined in terms of different realizations of segmental features like consonant and vowel phonemes (cf. Abercrombie 1977, Laver and Trudgill 1979, Wells 1970).

According to Laver and Trudgill (1979) there are four major ways in which accents may deviate on a segmental level from the standard pronunciation model. The first two concern deviations of phonological resources. An accent may differ from standard pronunciation either in having a different phonemic soundsystem, or in allowing different structural types of phonemic sequences. The first type is called a systemic deviation and the second type a structural one. The third type is termed a selectional deviation. It concerns the way in which otherwise systemically and structurally identical resources are lexically distributed, by choosing different phonemes for the pronunciation of a given word. The fourth major type of deviation from standard pronunciation is a purely phonetic matter. It concerns the way of how particular phonemes are actually pronounced. Deviations of this last type are called realizational (cf. Wells 1970, Abercrombie 1977).

Considering the first, second and fourth type of deviations, one might hypothesize that phonological deviations from standard pronunciation are perceptually more striking and evaluated less positively than purely phonetic deviations. The reason why is that deviations of the first and second type cause a larger dissimilarity, i.e. a larger linguistic distance to the standard pronunciation model than deviations of the fourth type. If the prescriptive standard pronunciation

norm plays a role, then similarity to forms of this final model should decide about correctness and less so similarity to forms that are more peripheral within the standard range.

Testing these hypotheses cannot be easily done within the paradigm typical of language attitude studies in the matched- and verbal-guise tradition. In these studies stimulus materials usually consist of speech fragments produced by mono- or bilingual speakers using different languages or language varieties. Judges are asked to evaluate the speakers of those varieties on a number of personality traits and these evaluations are then taken to be language attitudes. Hence these studies provide insight into the attitudes towards different groups of speakers marked off by their language. However, one does not get insight into the evaluation of the linguistic stimuli themselves, nor can anything be said about direct links between phonetic and phonological features on the one hand and evaluative reactions towards speakers on the other hand.

Language attitude studies in a more sociolinguistic tradition have concentrated more on the evaluation of short-term segmental features. For instance, in the subjective reaction tests of Labov (1966) and Trudgill (1972) stimuli consisting of isolated words and differing in the realization of only one phonological variable a time are presented to judges with the request to indicate the variants they consider correct or that correspond to their own use. These studies - contrary to those conducted within social psychological and communication traditions - give precise information about the evaluation of segmental phonetic and phonological features. However, neither the presentation of words in isolated forms, nor the kinds of reactions elicited in connection with these forms permits one to generalize to more realistic communicative situations where attitudes towards speakers are usually formed on the basis of larger fragments of running speech (cf. Knops 1988b).

In the research presented here, set up to examine the relative effect on language attitudes of phonological and phonetic deviations from standard pronunciation, both the social psychological and sociolinguistic paradigms were combined into one. This leads to a design where normal fragments of running speech and isolated word forms originating from these fragments constitute the stimulus materials; the evaluative reactions elicited in connection with these stimuli pertain to characteristics of the speech as well as the speakers. It must then be possible to get insight into the particular segmental features that play a determining role in the language evaluation process and to examine the relative effect on the evaluation of phonological vs. phonetic deviations from the standard pronunciation model. Further consequences of the design are that the relation between the evaluation of decontextualized words and larger fragments of running speech can be examined as well as the relation between the evaluation of speech and personality traits. Since the results concerning these latter relations have been extensively dealt with elsewhere, they will not be of central concern here. The interested reader is referred to Knops (1988a,b,c) for more detailed information concerning these topics.

2. Method

2.1. Stimulus materials

A ca. 30 sec. fragment of neutral prose was read on tape by seven speakers, two of which could be characterized as standard speakers (one speaker being a Dutchman, the other a Fleming). The remaining five speakers all had a regional accent, typical of various regions in the Netherlands and in Flanders. Two speakers came from what is regarded as the socio-economic centre of the Netherlands and of Flanders respectively (the Dutchman had a North-Holland accent, The Fleming a Brabant accent). Two other speakers had a regional accent typical of the southern periphery of the Netherlands (a North-Brabant and a Limburg accent). The last speaker had a West-Flemish accent, characteristic of the western periphery of Flanders. In all, there were four Dutch and three Flemish speakers. All of them were male, they had the same professions and were 30 to 35 years old.

Considerable attention was paid to reading tempo and fluency. Different recordings were made of each speaker so that the final versions could be matched for speech rate and reading fluency. The texts read aloud by the different speakers were presented as a whole to different judges. This procedure corresponds to the manner of presentation in social psychological language attitude research, where judges are normally confronted with stimuli containing fragments of running speech that represent different speech varieties.

From each of the seven fragments 15 words were isolated with the help of a porting system. The 15 words were the same for each speaker and represented approximately 25% of the reading fragments. In order not to disturb the intelligibility of these words when presented in isolation, only words with a primary or secondary sentence accent were selected and all except for two were polysyllabic. The 105 isolated words contained 27 different kinds of deviations from standard pronunciation, 15 of which could be characterized as phonological, the remaining 12 as phonetic. The exact nature of these phonological and phonetic deviations can be deduced from table 1. This table also contains information about the distribution of deviations over linguistic varieties and lexical items. Inspection of the table reveals that the same kind of deviation could occur in the speech of more than one speaker as well as in more than one decontextualized word of the same speaker. The total number of deviations therefore amounts to 94, 38 of which are phonological and 56 phonetic.

The isolated words were presented to the judges as well. This manner of presentation corresponds to sociolinguistically oriented language attitude research except for one major difference: the words were not spoken in isolation, but decontextualized from the speech fragments. A comparison of both conditions reveals the relation between the more global evaluative reactions towards speech fragments on the one hand and the more specific reactions towards particular speech characteristics on the other hand.

Table 1
Phonological and phonetic deviations from standard pronunciation: distribution over lexical items and linguistic varieties

Phonological deviations		lexical items	variety	number of occurrences
1.	v - f	vader, volkomen, vallen, wrevelig	NS, NH, BB, BW	8
2.	vr - vʀ	wrevelig	NS	1
3.	ər - ɐ	vader	NS, NH	2
4.	ər - ə	moeder	BB	1
5.	u - u.	moeder	NB, NL, BS, BB, BW	5
6.	vər - fʀ	verhaal	NL	1
7.	vəl - vl	wrevelig	BS, BB	2
8.	lʸf - ləf	half	NH, NL, BB	3
9.	lʸf - lv	half	NB	1
10.	h - Ø*	verhaal, half	NB, NL, BB	5
11.	h - ɣ	verhaal	BW	1
12.	ɪ - e	prins	BW	1
13.	ə - ən	vallen, buiten	NL	2
14.	əχ - ɪχ	wrevelig	NB, NL, BB, BW	4
15.	ʃ - stj	kastje	BS	1

Phonetic deviations				
1.	o. - ɔu	bioscoop, volkomen	NS, NH, NB	5
2.	o: - ɔu	toren	NS, NB	2
3.	ʌy - œ.	thuiskwam, buiten	NS, NH, NB, BB, BW	8
4.	ʌy - ɔu	buiten	NH	1
5.	a. - ɑ.	vader, verhaal	NH, NB, BB, BW	6
6.	r - ʀ	vader, moeder, prins, toren, verhaal	NH, NB, NL BW	13
7.	r - ɾ	moeder, verhaal	NS	2
8.	ə. - ə.ʌ	keuken	BB	1
9.	ə. - ə.ᵛ	keuken	NH, NB, BS	3
10.	ɑ - a	kastje, vallen half	NH, NB, NL BS, BB, BW	10
11.	e. - ei	wrevelig, weten	NH, BS	4
12.	ɪ - ĭ	prins	NB	1

* Ø in this case means omission

NS : Dutch standard
NH: North-Holland accent
NB: North-Brabant accent
NL: Limburg accent
BS : Belgian standard
BB : Brabant accent
BW : West-Flemisch

2.2. Evaluation instrument

An evaluation instrument was constructed containing semantic differential scales with five scale positions and two antonymic adjectives at the end of each scale. Two kinds of adjectives were used: adjectives designed for the evaluation of a speaker's speech (speech scales) and adjectives designed for the valuation of the speaker as a person (personality scales).

The speech scales were selected on the basis of a preliminary investigation conducted in 1985 in Nijmegen (cf. Knops 1988a). These scales were: the pronunciation is clear - unclear; pure - not pure; beautiful - ugly; cultivated - uncultivated; pleasant - unpleasant; careful - sloppy and natural - unnatural.

The personality scales were gathered on the basis of the literature pertaining to speakers' evaluation. The following seven scales were used: the speaker is intellligent - unintelligent; congenial - uncongenial; modest - arrogant; confident - unsure; friendly - unfriendly; reliable - unreliable and respectful - disrespectful.

2.3. Subjects

Subjects were five groups of about 50 students, originating from the same areas as the accented speakers used in this study: thus, they were natives of North-Holland, North-Brabant and Limburg in the Netherlands and of Brabant and West-Flanders in Belgium. 123 of the 251 volunteers were male (49%), the remaining 128 were female (51%). The age of the respondents varied from 17 to 29. All students were paid for their participation in the experiments.

Differences related to sex, age and regional background of the subjects will not be dealt with in this article. Here, only general results pertaining to the questions posed in the introduction will be discussed.

2.4. Procedure

The investigation was conducted at four different universities (Nijmegen, Amsterdam, Louvain and Kortrijk) and in different sessions with 18 to 50 students a time. Participants received a scale-booklet at their arrival in the language laboratory of each university. Then the experiment conductor explained the aims of the investigation and how to fill in the semantic differential scales. When the taperecorder was started, each student listened to the tape through a head-phone. The tape consisted of two parts. The first part contained the isolated words produced by the seven different speakers. Each word was repeated five times and followed by a short pause, so as to provide enough time to fill in the scales. Different words were separated by peep-tones. The second part consisted of the fragments of prose read aloud by the seven speakers. During the investigation several short pauses were inserted as breathing-spaces. When the end of the tape was

reached the students were asked to fill in a short questionnaire providing the investigator with some identity data. The whole procedure lasted for about 90 minutes.

3. Results

3.1. The perceptual salience of deviations from standard pronunciation

Examination of the relation between the speech and personality scales revealed that a two-dimensional model (obtained through principal components analysis with varimax rotation) best described the relations among the various scales. The first dimension of this model was formed by personality scales referring to the social and intellectual status of speakers ('confident - unsure'; 'intelligent - unintelligent') and speech scales referring to traditional prescriptive norms for good or correct articulation ('clear - unclear'; 'cultivated - uncultivated'; 'careful - sloppy'; 'pure - not pure'). The second dimension was formed by personality traits that display raters' concern for speakers' social attractiveness ('congenial - uncongenial'; 'friendly - unfriendly'; 'reliable - unreliable') and speech scales that refer to the naturalness and aesthetic qualities of speech ('beautiful - ugly'; 'natural - unnatural'). Two personality scales ('modest - arrogant' and 'respectful - disrespectful') did not fit into this model and were left out of further consideration.

Further analysis of the data was restricted to the first evaluative dimension (the 'status dimension'), because it best reflects the normative, prescriptive views of Dutch and Flemish judges on Netherlandic standard pronunciation. Other considerations that prompted this restriction were the fact that accent differences of a segmental nature have proved to be more salient in eliciting judgements on a status dimension (e.g., Ryan, Carranza and Moffie 1977) and the outcome that on the solidarity dimension the evaluative differences between the various speakers did not reach the level of significance.

In examining the question whether phonological deviations from standard pronunciation have more perceptual relevance than phonetic deviations the segmental determinants of language attitudes had to be defined. These were defined as the segmental deviations from standard pronunciation occurring in decontextualized words, the evaluations of which correlate significantly ($p < .05$) with the evaluations of the corresponding reading fragments. In table 2 the numbers of both the phonological and phonetic determinants of attitudes are given for each variety that was evaluated by the different groups of judges.

As can be seen from table 2 phonological deviations from standard pronunciation function more often as determinants of language attitudes than purely phonetic deviations. This is generally true, but not in the case of every language variety. Inspection of the determinants of the specific language varieties reveals that phonetic deviations from standard pronunciation do come into play

Table 2
Phonological versus phonetic determinants of attitudes (absolute numbers and percentages)

	NS		NH		NB		NL	
phonoligical determinants	13	65%	15	50%	12	60%	14	35%
phonetic determinants	17	68%	28	37.3%	33	47.1%	7	28%
	BS		**BB**		**BW**		**ALL**	
phonoligical determinants	5	33.3%	14	35%	12	48%	85	44.7%
phonetic determinants	8	40%	6	24%	13	32.5%	112	40%

Table 3
T-values for the differences between the mean evaluation of standard pronunciation features and the mean evaluation of phonological vs. phonetic deviations

varieties		North-Holland	North-Brabant	Limburg	Brabant	West-Flanders
NS	phonological	- 9.64**	-7.00**	-5.28**	-4.13**	-7.01**
	phonetic	-0.77	1.73	3.54	-2.57	1.14
NB	phonological	-10.74**	-7.03**	-9.42**	-4.36**	-7.58**
	phonetic	-8.33**	-4.90**	-6.03**	-1.73	-4.54**
NL	phonological	3.91**	2.85*	4.50**	-4.92**	-5.01**
	phonetic	-0.36	0.57	0.88	-4.44**	-3.99**
BS	phonological	1.94	2.64*	3.50**	3.91**	-3.16*
	phonetic	0.36	0.03	2.38*	1.74	-1.42
BB	phonological	-6.07**	-6.50**	-7.69**	-1.96	1.39
	phonetic	-4.65**	-5.58**	-5.72**	-0.90	0.03
BW	phonological	-3.13*	-1.76	-2.18*	-2.43*	-2.59*
	phonetic	0.34	0.50	-0.35	-1.73	0.36

\- more negative than the evaluation of standard features
\+ more positiive than the evaluation of standard features
** $p \leq .001$
* $p \leq .05$

as well, notably when the Dutch and Belgian standard variety had to be judged. In fact, this is not so surprising a result, if one considers that judges will have recognized and evaluated both varieties as standard varieties. The few cases where both standard speakers deviate from the normative standard pronunciation model on a phonological level will therefore have been judged as atypical, which on its turn has resulted in low correlations between those deviations and the corresponding reading fragments. In all cases where judges had to evaluate accented varieties, phonological deviations from standard pronunciation were evaluted more in consistency with the evaluations of the corresponding varieties as compared to deviations of a phonetic kind. If one subtracts the determinants of the attitudes towards both standard speakers, then the total number of phonological determinants amounts to 67 (= 43.2%), whereas that of phonetic determinants amounts to 87 (=37%).

On the whole, the conclusion seems to be warranted that phonetic deviations from standard pronunciation have less perceptual salience as determinants of language attitudes than phonological deviations. The latter are evaluated more reliably, i.e. they show greater consistency with the evaluations of the corresponding varieties than variants of a phonetic kind. This is not to say that the distinction between phonological and phonetic deviations from standard pronunciation is the only factor determining the evaluation of accented and non-accented speech. Other factors, such as degree of accent, judges greater familiarity with certain varieties, similarity to the own substandard variety, and the difference between primary and secondary dialect features (Schirmunski 1930), might play a role as well, but the relative influence of those factors will have to be further investigated.

3.2. The evaluation of deviations from standard pronunciation

Secondly, the question was examined whether phonological deviations from standard pronunciation are evaluated less positively than purely phonetic deviations. Comparison of the mean evaluations of phonological vs. phonetic deviations over the different varieties however revealed that phonological deviations are not evaluated less positively than purely phonetic deviations. Further inspection of the data brought to light that the evaluations of the various segmental features might be too heterogeneous te be simply taken together. This heterogeneity is due, among other things, to the fact that each linguistic variety is represented by only one speaker. Therefore a new analysis was performed which consisted in comparing the means for the evaluation of the standard pronunciation features and the evaluation of the phonological and phonetic deviations of each language variety respectively.

In table 3 the T-values are given for the differences between the means of the evaluation of standard pronunciation features and the evaluation of phonological or phonetic deviations respectively. In most cases the T-values are negative and higher for phonological than for phonetic deviations, which means that phonological deviations were evaluated more negatively. In some cases, however, the T-values are positive, meaning that the deviations from standard

pronunciation were evaluated more positively than the standard pronunciation features themselves. Here again, however, the T-values for phonological deviations are ehigher than those for phonetic deviations. The least that can be said, therefore, is that phonological deviations are evaluated more extremely, either more positively or more negatively, than purely phonetic deviations. This more extreme evaluation of phonological deviations is moreover in line with their greater perceptual relevance as segmental features typically associated with a particular language variety.

Thus, the direction of evaluation of segmental deviations from standard pronunciation is largely determined by the prestige of language varieties associated with those deviations. The prestige of a language variety will largely be due to extralinguistic factors and may differ from group to group. The distinction between phonological and phonetic deviations does however play a role in that phonological deviations from standard pronunciation get more extreme evaluations than phonetic deviations in either a positive or negative way. This means that segmental features do play distinct roles in language attitudes according to their nature.

4. Conclusions

The main objective of this study, to examine the way in which the nature or quality of segmental deviations from standard pronunciation affect listeners' evaluative reactions to speakers, has led to a design that reconciles both sociolinguistic and social psychological approaches in language attitude research. With this design it was possible to indicate some segmental features that may have played a role in eliciting attitudes towards different varieties of Dutch. This allows the conclusion that the evaluation of language varieties is partly determined by differences involving realizations of consonant and vowel phonemes. The distinction between phonological and phonetic deviations from standard pronunciation was shown to be a factor determining the relative influence exerted by segmental features. Phonological deviations from standard pronunciation turned out to be more important in determining language attitudes than phonetic deviations. In line with the greater perceptual salience was the further finding that phonological deviations are evaluated more extremely than purely phonetic deviations. The initial hypothesis that phonological deviations are evaluated less positively could not be confirmed, since the evaluation of segmental deviations from standard pronunciation is largely determined by the prestige of language varieties associated with those deviations. The distinction between both kinds of deviations does however play a role in that phonological deviations from standard pronunciation get more extreme evaluations than phonetic deviations in either a positive or negative way. This means that segmental features do play distinct roles in language attitudes according to their nature, a result that would not have been found if the search for a way of combining social psychological and sociolinguistic approaches in the study of language attitudes had not been undertaken. It can therefore be concluded that the reconciliation of both designs has proved useful in finding out something about the intricate interplay of linguistic and extralinguistic factors in language evaluation.

Future studies might consider the possibility of controlling for extra- and paralinguistic factors such as voice quality and prosodic features. These may have affected the evaluations in this study, but then one has to remember that it is almost impossible to find speakers who are able to imitate various ethnic and regional accents in a natural and convincing way. Also, the number of deviations from standard pronunciation, i.e. degree of accent, should ideally be more constant across speakers or varieties than was the case in this study. But then again, one has to consider the fact that degree and quality of accent may be intricately interlinked in natural situations. Finally, future research will have to find out whether the distinction between consonant and vowel phonemes is more important in determining the perceptual salience of accent features than the distinction between phonological and phonetic deviations from standard pronunciation.

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